197 land, dialectal barriers were gradually broken down. A situation like that proved to be favorable to the further popularization of the national language. Although it may be exaggeration to say that now the national language has replaced the local dialects in the Central-South Region, it is neverless true that kuo-yü is gaining wider acceptance than ever before.

VI. THE CHINESE WRITTEN LANGUAGE

• 212 Despite the fact that the Chinese people in this region speak different Chinese dialects, the fact still remains that they use one and the same system of writing. China's written language consists of thousands of uniformly understood logographs or "characters" as they are commonly called. They can be understood only with reference to their ancient forms.

A. Pictographs

Chinese characters are traditionally classified into six main categories, the first of which is pictographs. The characters in this category all originated from simple pictures: jih⁴ (now written 日) is the character for "the sun;" yüeh⁴ is the character for "the moon," (now written 月). However, they have long lost their function of picturing things and become merely conventionalized visual symbols of spoken words.

B. Ideographs

212 The second category is that of the ideographs, which are characters indicating in a diagrammatic manner simple ideas, as shang 上 for "up, above", hsia 下 for "down, below", i 一 for "one", erh 二 for "two", san 三 for "three", etc. Pictographs and ideographs, presumably bases of ancient Chinese characters, however, amount to only one-tenth of the entire stock of China's written symbols.

C. Compound Ideographs

The third category is that of the compound ideographs or characters whose meanings are determined by the combined meanings of their component parts, as ming 明, which is a combination of the "sun" and "moon", stands for "bright"; hsin 信, which is a combination of "man" and "word", hence, the "words of a man" stands for "honesty."

D. Phonetic Loan Characters

The fourth category is that of phonetic loan characters. These characters were all borrowed from existing words homophonous with the new ones for which written symbols had to be coined. For example, when a written symbols had to be created for the new word lai, meaning "to come," instead of resorting to pictographic or ideographic devices for the coining of such a symbol a symbol, the old character 來, meaning "barley," also similarly pronounced, was borrowed for that

•212 purpose. Often such a borrowed character displaced the original source. Thus, 來 is now used exclusively to mean "to come" rather than "barley." Similarly, ch'i 其, the third personal pronoun, is now used invariably as such rather than as a symbol for "basket," the meaning of the original word similarly written and similarly pronounced.

E. Phonetic Compounds

Phonetic compounds constitute the fifth and perhaps the most numerous category of Chinese characters. They consist of two portions, a "signific" or meaning portion, and a "phonetic" or pronunciation portion. The former reveals the general meaning while the latter indicates the pronunciation of the compound. Thus, jan 燃, "to burn" has huo 火 "fire" as its signific, and jan 然, "so, thus" as its phonetic. Similarly, t'ang 糖 "sugar" has mi 米 "rice, cereal" as its signific, and t'ang 唐 "bold talk" as its phonetic. It may be pointed out here that the phonetic element of such compounds may or may not have been a "phonetic loan compound," that the pronunciation of the phonetic may or may not be exactly identical with that of the compound even on the basis of ancient Chinese pronunciation, and that the meaning indicated by the signific is at best categorical rather than minutely accurate.

E. Derivative Characters

The last of the six categories consists of what may be called derivative characters, the

• 212 origin of which is still uncertain. Some scholars think that the characters of the category resulted from graphic inversion, such as lao 老 "aged, old" and k'ao 考 "aged, old"; others think that they resulted from changes brought about by modifications in sounds accompanied by modifications in meanings, such as heng 亨 "propitious" and hsiang 享 "to enjoy." At any rate this the smallest category.

VII. CHINESE SCRIPT AND THE HIGH INCIDENCE OF ILLITERACY

It is true that written Chinese is uniformly understood throughout the country and has created no difficulty for literate Chinese in communicating ideas to one another regardless of their dialectal affiliation. But it is also true that although Chinese characters might have been devised for writing the spoken language in ancient times, now the great majority of symbols have become merely conventionalized written equivalents of individual spoken words Some of the characters for most commonly used words such as 鹽 "salt" and 鐵 "iron," for instance, consist of twenty-four and twenty-one strokes respectively. To say the very least about them, they are time-consuming for the average Chinese to learn and memorize. As there are thousands of characters in everyday use, many of which are comparable in complexity and clumsiness, it should be apparent that it will take an average person many years to become adequately literate. It is entirely possible and highly probable that there is a definite connection between the

212 complicated and clumsy Chinese script and the high incidence of illiteracy in China, although other equally convincing factors, too, must have contributed substantially to that fact.

VIII. LITERARY CHINESE

212 195 Besides the many different dialects, many of which have their own written counterparts of varying degrees of completeness, there is yet another language in China known as the literary language, as it is usually called by Western writers. It is the language of China's undying classics, owing its preservation to the inflexible and conservative system of writing of the country. As such, it has no standard pronunciation of its own. In other words, it has as many standards of pronunciation as there are dialects in China. That is to say that if a passage written in literary Chinese is read by a speaker of Northern or Southwestern Mandarin, Kan-Hakka, Cantonese or Southern Min, it will sound like the dialect he speaks. Moreover, in grammar and syntax, literary Chinese is so different from any of the dialects that it is almost a different language, entirely free from the influences of the changes that have taken place in the dialects. Hence, it is possible for a lettered Chinese at the same time to speak his own dialect and write literary Chinese without any strange feeling on his part at all. As a language, literary Chinese is noted for its conciseness, frequently leaving out many things which are ordinarily expressed, thus creating a kind of ambiguous terseness all its own, requiring its readers to fill in the

212 195 missing elements as they go along. This characteristic accounts for the reason why a passage written in literary Chinese, when read aloud, can seldom be fully understood by a listener even though he may speak the dialect of the person reading.

Despite such a shortcoming, literary Chinese has been exerting a tenacious influence on the Chinese, especially the lettered segment of the population. It is literary Chinese that has kept China's classics alive and perpetuated the many pithy dicta of wisdom unsurpassed in the living language of the Chinese people despite dialectal barriers of any kind. Although the written national language has been gaining wider and wider acceptance, the great majority of government and commercial organizations are still using literary Chinese in the transaction of their business.

IX. LANGUAGE REFORMS

212 185 Attempts to introduce language reforms in China began on a nationwide basis with the movement to unify the national language shortly after the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1911. The movement was followed closely by efforts to reform the written language. Those who advocated such reforms were of the opinion that since the characters were so complicated and time-consuming for the average person to learn, and since literary Chinese was so unrealistic and impractical, something

had to be done to make the written language of China more effective, so that it could be within the grasp of the average Chinese citizen in a relatively short period of time.

A. Phonetic Symbols

One type of reform advocated the use of phonetic symbols as an aid to the illiterate to learn to read. However, since the sole function of these symbols is phonetic, they are effective when they are used as a guide to correct pronunciation in accordance with the standard of the national language for the purpose of leveling down dialectal differences in pronunciation. They are helpful only to those who have not yet acquired such a knowledge. They cannot possibly add anything to the attempt to make the Chinese language system simpler or more readily accessible to the illiterate masses.

B. Alphabetization

Another type of reform advocated was the alphabetization of Chinese in order to get away from ideographic writing. As a matter of fact, the use of the Roman alphabet for the transcription of sounds of the Chinese language is no novel suggestion. As early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit missionary to China, began to transcribe the then Mandarin sounds with the Roman alphabet on the basis of the speech sounds of his own native Italian language. Later, other systems of romanization were devised by others to meet the needs of those speaking other

212
185 Western languages. The most widely used system among English-speaking peoples is the so-called Wade-Giles system, originally devised by Sir Thomas Wade, a member of the British legation in China, and later revised by the British sinologist, Herbert A. Giles. Another system in current use in this country is devised by the linguists at Yale University, and it is known as the Yale System.

In 1928 the Chinese Ministry of Education adopted a system of romanization known as Gwoyeu Romatzyh or National Language Romanization, devised by a group of Chinese linguists and intellectual leaders such as Dr. Yuen Ren Chao, Dr. Lin Yutang, and others. Its distinguishing feature is that instead of indicating Chinese intonation by means of superior figures or diacritical marks, it spells the different tones of Chinese words with different letters: mai (second tone, Wade-Giles mai^{2}) "to bury"; mae (third tone, Wade-Giles mai^{3}) "to buy"; may (fourth tone, Wade-Giles mai^{4}) "to sell."

Between 1929 and 1931 another system of romanization known as Latinxua was devised ma mainly by Professor A. A. Dragunov, a linguist of Leningrad, primarily for teaching the Chinese workers in the USSR to read. It has been very popular, for obvious reasons, with the Chinese Communists, who have been doing all they can to promote it and popularize it. However, since the system makes no attempt, except in an ad hoc manner, to distinguish tones in Chinese, it is not only in-

212
185 adequate and unsatisfactory, but often misleading.

C. Simplified Characters

Yet another type of proposal advocated the simplification of Chinese characters, especially the more complicated ones in common use, by reducing the number of their strokes. Advocates of this proposal believed that a simplified system of writing would make the whole process of learning to read and write Chinese much easier and less time-consuming. For example, ts'ai "then" has been reduced to look like 才, and 鐵 t'ieh "iron," to look like 铁. If a satisfactory principle of simplification that is philologically sound can be worked out, so that the simplified characters, if necessary, can be identified with the origina characters, the adoption of such a system amy turn out to be a boon to China's millions of illiterate people in their effort to become literate.

D. Basic Chinese

A fourth type of proposal advocated the reduction of the number of characters to be meant for general use in order to simplify the written language. For example, the series of textbooks for teaching the illiterate compiled by Dr. Yen Yang-ch'u, leader of the Mass Education Movement, who is better known abroad as James Y. C. Yen, represents an effort made in this direction. On the basis of some 1,200 characters chosen by him in

212
185

terms of their frequency, he compiled texts that he believed would enable China's illiterate people to meet their basic needs in expression. As another effort made more or less in the same direction, we may mention the list of characters chosen by Hung Shen, the famous dramatist. In 1935 he published his Method of Teaching and Using 1,000 Basic Chinese Characters. Instead of basing his choice of characters on frequency and limiting their usefulness and expressiveness to the rudimentary plane, he chose them on the criteria of their flexibility in forming compounds with other characters and their adequacy for general use in everyday situations.

X. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER THE COMMUNISTS

The Chinese Communists have been cautious in their efforts to reform the Chinese language. They frequently quote Stalin, that the language of a people cannot be artifically changed and that the evolution of any language has to follow a natural course.[1] However, to combat illiteracy the Communists also see the immediate need of simplifying the Chinese written language. In this regard the government policy is based on Mao Tse-tung's statement in his On New Democracy that, "under certain conditions, the written language of China must be reformed."[2]

1. See quotation, discussion in Ts'ao Po-han Yü-wen Wen-t'i P'ing-lun Chi [Critical Essays on the Language Problem] , Shanghai, Tung-fang shu-tien, 1954, p. 95.

2. Mao Tse-tung, Mao Tse-tung Hsüan-chi [Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung] , Vol. II, Peking, Jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1952, p. 680.

212 Envisaged as an ultimate goal of language reform is
185 the complete Latinization of the Chinese written language. In other words the characters will be replaced by the Latin alphabet. Communist promoters of Latinization often cite Lenin's pronouncement that, "Latinization is the great revolution of the East,"[3] to substantiate their argument.

192 The Communists are trying to cultivate
185 a politically conscious proletariat in China; China's spoken language, as reflected in songs, plays. and speeches, is becoming more proletarian and drifting away from the set phrases and expressions traditionally used by the intellectual class. Extensive use of professional jargon and local expressions is the vogue of the day. Political and scientific terms, particularly those of Russian origin, are apparently on the lips of every Chinese who has had Communist indoctrination.
191 It must be noted that the Communists, in adopting
185 many new terms heretofore unfamiliar to the average Chinese, are aware of the danger of corrupting their language. The People's Daily (the Pravda of China), in an editorial on June 6, 1951, urged the use of correct Chinese and stressed the need for the study of grammar so that " the Chinese language will not become corrupt and impure."[4]

---

3. John de Francis, Nationalism and Language Reform in China, Princeton University Press, 1950, p. 90.

4. Quoted in Jen-min Chiao-yü [People's Education], Peking, March 1955, p. 28.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF 15 East China
AF15

212
185 As to the movement to eradicate illiteracy, the current trend is to promote accelerated methods of language teaching and to standardize the simplified characters already in use. One of the most publicized methods to accelerate language learning was introduced in 1948 by Ch'i Chien-hua, a cultural cadre attached to the armed forces. Ch'i champions the use of the "National Phonetic Symbols" (not to be confused with the Gwoyeu Romatzyh discussed earlier in this chapter) as the "walking stick" for new learners. The phonetic symbols are employed as a pronunciation aid to the students. This method was said to be so successful that the Communist government in May 1952 recognized Ch'i's contribution by inviting him to the capital and awarding him a citation.[5]

Simplification of written characters has received official blessing. When the Committee on the Study of Language Reform under the Ministry of Education compiled 798 such simplified characters and recommended that they be adopted, the recommendation was given immediate attention. On May 1, 1955 the Committee announced that 57 of the simplified characters would be adopted by six national periodicals for experimental purposes.[6] On October 15 1955, an All-China Conference on Language Reform was called by the committee to revise and enlarge the proposed list of simplified characters.[7]

---

5. People's Education, May 1952. p. 4.

6. Hua-ch'iao Jih-pao [China Daily News] , New York, May 2, 1955, p. 1.

7. Min-chu P'ing-lun [The Democratic Review] , Hong Kong. Nov. 1, 1955, p. 577.

1:Stanford U. S-4, 5 1956 AF 15 East China
AF15

212
185 The Latinization movement., although without much official promotion, is by no means dead. There are publications printed in this new form of Chinese. One ardent supporter of this movement, Ni Hai-shu, claimed that in 1949 there were over 300 such publications with a total circulation of about 500 000, already on the market.[8] In February 1952. there was evidence to show that active support of this movement was discernible in East China.[9]

There are other recent developments in language reform. One is the attempt to standardize the use of punctuation marks On October 5, 1951. the Government Administration Council issued a directive on the correct use of punctuation marks.[10] Since that time the general trend has been toward standardization.

Another development in language reform is the practice of writing Chinese horizontally and from left to right. Such a practice is not new, but the Communist government is the first regime to sanction it. Following lengthy discussions on such a practice, national publications like the Enlightenment Daily and New China Monthly, since January 1, 1955, have been printing their texts horizontally.

---

8. Ni Hai-shu Chung-kuo Yü-wen Ti Hsin-sheng [The Rebirth of the Chinese Language], Shanghai, Shih-tai shu-pao ch'u-pan-she 1949, pp. 458-59; also see John de Francis, op. cit., pp. 131-34.

9. Hsin-wen-tzu Pan-yüeh-k'an [New Language Semimonthly], Shanghai February 16, 1952, p. 28.

10. Jen-min Shou-ts'e [People's Handbook], 1952, Shanghai, Ta-kung pao, 1952, p. 437. [p. 136]

AF15

212
185 As to the languages of minority nationality groups, the over-all Communist policy is to help them create their own written scripts. The theory is that these people must first be given their own languages; then it will be easier for them to learn Chinese (Latinized Chinese, most probably). In East China, minority nationality groups are more scattered than those in Central-South and Southwest China; there has been no report on Communist attempts to reform the minority languages in this region.

XI. SPEAKERS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

191 Before 1949, the use of foreign languages, mainly English, was noticed in a few large port cities in East China such as Shanghai, Tsingtao, and Amoy. Contact with English-speaking people in such cities and inclusion of English in school curricula accounted for the popularity of English. However, with the exception of a few foreign missionary schools in which English was emphasized and taught by native speakers, instruction in English in the schools did not amount to much. This was true even of the colleges of the region. Although some college students could manage to read a publication in English with reasonable ease they could hardly converse in it. Generally speaking, it may be safely assumed that about one-tenth of the secondary school graduates and possibly one-third of the college graduates could read English, although not without some difficulty. The over-all percentage of those who could speak it would be even smaller.